

Each felt fairly secure in the knowledge of what was expected of her, and there was great excitement in anticipation of the summer that lay ahead.

Counsellor training did not end with the pre-camp session. Each morning during the summer we met for half an hour after breakfast. This was made possible by the counsellors-in-training who supervised the tidying of cabins in the younger tribe, thus releasing the Ojibway counsellors. The system had its drawbacks, for though these half-hour sessions were of tremendous value to the counsellor and hence to the camper, the counsellor missed that intimate association with the camper. Also the counsellors-in-training were sometimes too young and inexperienced to cope with the situations. We were to find that only as they were given adequate support and supervision could this practice work successfully. At any rate, Ojibways loved having the counsellors-in-training and they in turn, treasured the experience almost more than any other. As for the counsellors, without those morning meetings we could never have cleared the details of the day and started off with that common purpose and sense of tackling the day together.

Those meetings were of necessity short and to the point. The *Counsellor Guide* says of them:

It is a time for intelligent suggestion. Constructive criticism and co-operation from every member of the staff is expected. Avoid lounging, starting a personal conversation, or making irrelevant remarks. State your problems and outline what you have to say, clearly and without loss of time.

When my sister read this she said, "Heaven help them if they stutter!"

Nevertheless, when we proceeded in a disciplined manner we covered an amazing amount of ground, and we rarely if ever had to call a special meeting or encroach on a counsellor's free time at rest hour or after taps. As



the group was assembling, requisition slips regarding needs and repairs were signed and passed in to the director. These were quickly checked after the meeting and sent to the office or the men, and were attended to promptly. The countless verbal requests were no longer a tax on the director's memory. The meeting was co-operatively planned, and discussion was related both to the needs of the children and to the educational requirements of the counsellors.

In this meeting, if a camper needed help in some activity, her cabin counsellor asked for it and it was quickly taken care of. If a counsellor needed help, she made the fact known. There were always willing volunteers. The way in which one counsellor helped another with a camper or in a camp project of any kind, whether in her field or not, was a never-ending source of amazement to the newcomer.

A counsellor working on special days or projects kept us up-to-date regarding her progress.

The programme for the day, and counsellors' half days, were checked so that we were all aware of what was going on and who would be out of camp.

Some days we split up into activity groups, some days into tribal groups, and other days the meetings were not so hurried and we had more time for discussion.

We kept records of each camper's progress. These were carefully considered with the counsellor group each week. In this way we gained a fairly comprehensive picture of the campers' activities and were kept aware of special instances where extra encouragement was needed.

Personal difficulties or problems of the camper were dealt with in the tribal group or with the director, and care was always taken to see that any discussion was constructive. It was interesting to see the changes that took place over a summer and over the years, and



realize the important part that camps were playing in the happiness and development of so many children.

The counsellors had also a post-camp session at the end of the summer. All who could remain did so for two days. This was for the purpose of looking at the summer in retrospect, taking note of our successes and failures, and laying plans based on that experience for the following summer. Those two days gave us the satisfaction of a job finished and well done. If not well done, at least we knew wherein we had failed, and how to profit by our failure another year.

The counsellor training in camp was often supplemented by the training institutes or special courses given during the winter under the auspices of the Ontario Camping Association or The Margaret Eaton School. Sometimes the counsellors remained for The Margaret Eaton School September Camp, which was open to counsellors of other camps, and sometimes in the month of June they attended short intensive training camps in the United States for canoeing, aquatics or camp craft, or a canoe trip training camp run for a number of years by Dr. Mary Northway and Miss Flora Morrison in Haliburton, Ontario.

There were many policies in our *Counsellor Guide* which saved us from catastrophe over and over again. To quote one in particular:

There may be times when you see things done that conflict with camp standards, or that you consider detrimental to the aim. You are asked to take responsibility. First, give the person concerned a chance to correct the situation. If she is unwilling to do so or makes no move, the matter should be brought to the attention of the director. It is advisable to have the person concerned present on that occasion.

We knew the difference between loyalty to camp standards and being a "tattle-tale." In consequence, a



mutual understanding regarding the policy by camper, counsellor and staff was established. Practices contrary to our aim of safety have been nipped in the bud many times because someone had the courage of her convictions and knew that her first loyalty was not to the gang, but to the thing she knew to be right. For instance, the safety rules about going out of bounds on the water or in the woods were uncompromising. On the first infringement the culprit was sent to report, whether the discovery was made by a counsellor or a camper. On one occasion, when the woods rule was broken, all reported their misdemeanour except one. She was brought in by her own Little Chief and left to tell her story.

Another policy which stood us in good stead was one on relationships:

If a child has a "crush" the thing is not to repress it, and not to use it to feed one's ego, but to try and understand the camper's need of expressing her affection and admiration; and to help her redirect that energy into work and into caring for other campers. Above all, not to allow it to develop into an exclusive relationship.

To get this discussed and out in the open before camp started was good. Counsellorship was a new experience to many and had we not talked this matter over and come to a common understanding and common solution, there would undoubtedly have been many awkward situations.

Our code said, "People before things," "Campers before a project." Yes, this policy was understandable. A counsellor no matter how keen to finish a project would be expected to be alert to the weariness of the campers involved and postpone her own interest. But what about a camper before a principle?

For instance, when a child dragged a canoe over a snag and tore the canvas, my first inclination was to deal with the carelessness; not the damage to the canoe, but the



carelessness which caused it. I had to learn that the important thing was neither the canoe, or the carelessness, but the way I dealt with the child.

Another instance of a similar nature was the way in which I tried to extract the truth when something went wrong. When I dealt with the wrong I did not get very far, but when I put myself in the child's place and admitted the last lie I had told, the barriers came down, the truth came pouring out. The child was open and honest and went off with nothing to hide. I found a great bond of unity and trust was formed by simple honesty and that the grown-up had to open the way.

It is quite an adventure each summer for a counsellor when she first comes face to face with the campers who are to be in her cabin. She already knows their names and something about them, and as she meets them on the dock each new face reveals something of the shyness and fears of one who has never been in camp before.

Her heart misses a beat as she faces her responsibilities. She knows that in the next few days she must try to discover what each child most needs and what ambitions each has brought to camp. She has been told in advance what each parent hopes for the child. She knows what the camp itself aims to do for them as a whole, and as she looks at their faces again her own aim for each begins to take form. She remembers the topic of the discussion of the morning, "Appreciate the good; recognize the faults, but don't let them get you down. Try to see the possibilities in the child by looking through her faults to the person you think she could be."

Gradually they begin to talk to her, and presently their talk becomes chatter and they are well away. Already she begins to see possibilities in the thin, lonely camper in the corner; and the two gigglers on the other side of the cabin promise lots of life. She feels she is lucky in the



group that has been given her, and so the summer starts. Through discussion, the particular interests of each child are brought out, and the campers begin to know and appreciate the good qualities in one another, and see the needs as well.

The gigglers are not always as thoughtful as they might be, and sometimes there are hurt feelings when someone makes a quick retort. The counsellor gradually learns when it is best to step in and become the Justice of the Peace, and when it is wise to sit back and let them settle things for themselves.

Probably the counsellor gets to know the campers best as she goes with them on hikes, cook-outs and dawn paddles. She has not tried appeasement in order to win popularity. They have coaxed and tried to see how far they could go, of course, but she has remained firm, consistent, has been willing to take time and talk things over with them, she has realized that she was there to develop their personalities rather than want them to admire and yield to her personality. Moreover, she has tried consistently to hold them up to their highest aims, and deep down that is what they have wanted. She has won their respect. After taps, as she makes her way back to her cabin in the darkness, she remembers with new understanding another watchword of the morning's discussion, and says to herself, "My job is to build the loyalty of the group around the spirit and ideals of camp rather than around myself."

These are a few of the principles of counselling that each has to grasp in order to deal successfully with children; there are many others. The counsellor has to be constantly aware of the children who find it hard to adjust, keeping in mind that many are away from home for the first time and possibly are not accustomed to living with a large group of people. There will be an occasional



homesick child. A counsellor will understand her feelings and arrange a cook-out with the cabin group, as far away from camp as possible, to help her gain a sense of security in the small group. She has to be sensitive to the little lone wolf who claims she likes to be by herself, but in all probability is filled with the deepest longing to have friends. She doesn't know how to begin; she is shy, self-conscious and feels inferior. In reality she is thinking only of herself, but she is bound to find security somewhere in order to prove herself, so she buries herself in lone wolf hobbies, which are in themselves good but not an answer to her needs. A counsellor's patience and interest are specially needed to help her find successful achievement.

The child who feels inferior can usually be trained to develop abilities which in time will make her truly superior along certain lines. All genuine superiority grows out of a sense of inferiority which has served as a spur to unusual effort.\*

There is also the child who feels inferior because of the brilliant achievements of an older sister. She is dogged by the constant sense of failure. The counsellor will realize that the child's own gifts must be brought out and developed. For the skills a camper learns at camp are just as important to a rounded personality and successful life as those she learns elsewhere, and when she learns to do something well she develops a certain staunchness of character. A camper who can swim and paddle, pack a pack, cook a meal and make everyone comfortable around a camp fire, who can enjoy the wind and the rain, the stars, the birds and the trees, has gained something that will stand her in good stead all her life.

A noteworthy example is one of our early campers in whom we take great pride. She was one whom we con-

\*From *The Rediscovery of Man*, by Henry C. Link. Macmillan, New York.

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sidered rather frail, but during her years as a camper she was vitally interested in all phases of camp life. She gives partial credit to her camp training for instilling in her a love of the wilds and a knowledge of camping techniques which later helped her to cope with hardships in the far North and thoroughly enjoy doing it. She assisted her prospector husband in many extended canoe trips and surveys, lived in a tent with the temperature as severe as sixty below, and helped with the building of their log cabin. As the town developed around them she found herself acting as the veterinary for the town dogs and tuner of the community pianos. When the church was built she became organist; as the community developed she helped to organize and conduct amateur theatricals. This and much more. Camp provided no such hardships, but it helped to foster the dauntless spirit that enabled her to meet life in the far North with zest and enjoyment.

Counselling at its best is a happy vocation. The counsellor is dealing with young, happy, live individuals who respond, people who look to her for leadership in one of the happiest experiences of their youth. They may demand all she has, but out of her giving comes one of the most satisfying rewards life can offer.

The counsellor who puts everything into her work with no thought of what she will get out of it invariably finds she has gained even more than the campers under her care.

### *The Counsellor's Half Days*

To make provision for time off for the relaxation and recreation of the counsellor was a very necessary part of the planning, for counselling calls for long hours of responsibility with little time for privacy or individual interests. Unless the counsellor was scheduled for duty, she was completely free at rest hour from one-thirty until



three, and after taps, when she went off, with canoe and cushion for a paddle in the moonlight or perhaps just sat around the camp fire. To the counsellors the relaxation, refreshment and happy companionship around the fire sometimes seemed more important than sleep. Finally we decided that fifty-six hours of sleep during the week was absolutely necessary. This allowed for one or two late evenings, and one or two nights when they would have to turn in early.

It was necessary as well that the counsellor should be free and away from the scene of action at least one-half day a week, except for the first and last weeks of camp. Counsellors signed up for their half days and spent them as they chose, provided there were not too many absent from one activity or one tribe, and always one or other of the nurses remained on the premises. The half days were checked with the programme co-ordinator, requests for food put in the day before, duties delegated, and the counsellor was off at twelve noon, returning by twelve midnight, or the following morning in time for flag raising.

There were many ways in which a counsellor might spend her half day, but the popular idea was to spend it in relaxation at Counsellor's Point (the night too, if she wished). There was always a tent there in case of rain.

For the first half day, it was customary for a former counsellor to take a new counsellor along and initiate her in skilful ways of enjoying the day to the full and coming back re-created.

The following description of a half day was written by Ann Greey, a camper and counsellor at Tanamakoon for many years:

A whole half day! Rather a strange expression, but to counsellors it is a treasured afternoon away from responsibility, which is planned and re-planned, its activities varied enough to fill anyone's normal day. To their racing minds the endless



possibilities of how to spend these fleeting hours never seemed to take time into consideration.

Sometimes a half day is spent in an excursion to Huntsville for a steak dinner and the movie playing that week. You paddle the two and a half miles to Highland Inn as fast as the canoe will carry you and hurry through the forty-mile drive to arrive in plenty of time to enjoy the unfamiliar pleasure of walking along sidewalks and looking into shop windows.

A visit from parents or a beau on your half day is eagerly anticipated. The afternoon flies away in the endless chatter of episodes and adventures you have each enjoyed in the few weeks since you have seen each other.

More than likely you will spend several half days at Counsellor's Point and these half days begin in the same manner as you start every New Year's with an insurmountable number of resolutions, or in this case, with countless odd jobs for which you are now finding time. This afternoon you are going to write all the letters you owe; read the book you brought with you that is on your English course next fall; have a good sleep; get the suntan that you are taking home; and do some laundry, because you haven't any clothes left to wear. And with grim determination you stumble down to the dock with all this equipment necessary for a good half-day. Of course, that is, provided it is not raining; if it is you leave the suntan lotion and laundry behind and tack on several other articles suitable for the prevailing weather.

At this point the hilarity begins, because there are your companions similarly laden down with equally ponderous loads, and it is quite a ludicrous sight as the thought assails you of how little one needs on a five-day canoe trip and how much for one afternoon. Inevitable back-tracking occurs to the triproom to get an axe, matches and can-opener, all forgotten in haste, and then you are off to Counsellor's Point in canoes resembling Chinese junks carrying precious cargo.

Counsellor's Point is an ideal tonic for every counsellor in its peaceful and protected surroundings. A refuge in the woods free from all cares and responsibilities. To be able to pursue the camping skills that her friends willingly show her, or to experiment in sketching and whittling to her heart's delight, provide a satisfaction which cannot be equalled and a wonderful relaxation in light-hearted concentration.





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